



February 8, 2023

Honorable Senator William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB33 – **Correctional Services - Medical Parole - Life Imprisonment**

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 33 **Correctional Services - Medical Parole - Life Imprisonment**, sponsored by Senator Jill Carter. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

SB27 aims to repeal provisions requiring the Governor's approval in order for the Maryland Parole Commission to grant medical parole to an inmate serving out a life sentence in prison. The Maryland Parole Commission makes decisions to grant or deny Medical Parole. My organization was glad to support the work to take politics out of parole by no longer requiring the Governor to approve parole for eligible Marylanders. We request you to extend this measure to incarcerated Marylanders who are also eligible for Medical Parole.

The Maryland Parole Commission was established under the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and charged with deciding whether Marylanders serving sentences of six months or more in state or local facilities, are suitable for release under supervision on a case-by-case basis.

The Commission looks at multiple factors when conducting a parole grant hearing, including the nature and circumstance of the offense; victim input; history and pattern of offenses; prior incarcerations; institutional adjustment; rehabilitation; programming needs; home plans and employment readiness. These decisions are not taken lightly.

The process for an inmate to be eligible for medical parole is extensive and includes the warden submitting documentation to the Commissioner of Correction including a statement from the candidate's attending physician that includes the person's diagnosis, prognosis, inpatient or outpatient status, and justification for meeting the Medical Parole criteria.

Appointments to the Parole Commission are made by the Governor. The Governor should demonstrate trust in officials appointed under his authority. They are more familiar with each individual's circumstances and can better evaluate readiness for release.

The Parole Commission should be the final decision-maker for the parole process in all cases, including medical parole. In 2021, five people recommended for medical parole died waiting for the Governor to act. Passing SB33 is the humane thing to do, and we respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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